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## AN EXPERIMENT IN EDUCATION IN ACCIDENT PREVENTION

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An experiment in education in accident prevention has been carried out in the Harris Teachers College and the Wyman Observation School during the past year as a part of a program of educational reconstruction. The point of view from which we are studying education is social, and we are attempting to reconstruct the curriculum on social grounds. The purpose is, on the one hand, to ascertain the kinds of social needs the individual has while in school and after he leaves the schools for a place in society outside of the school environment. This demands a knowledge of the situations to which the individual must adjust himself. On the other hand, it is our purpose to discover the habits, skills, attitudes, points of view, and ideals concerning these social situations that should be developed in the child by means of the curriculum during his school career. For instance, by a study of society and its demands upon the individual going out from the school, we find that it is necessary that he possess certain habits, skills, ideals, attitudes, and so forth, relating to the health, vocational fitness, civic duties and responsibilities, accident prevention, thrift, etc., if he is to be an effective unit in the social organization. It is our purpose to develop these ideals, habits, skills, etc., through curricular instruction.

The experiment in teaching accident prevention, then, is merely one effort of the many in process to reconstruct the whole elementary-school curriculum from the point of view of the needs of the individual as a social unit. The dominant motive in this experiment is threefold. First, an effort has been made to combat the serious menace to human welfare of the constantly increasing number of serious public and industrial accidents. During the period of the war, when fewer than seventy thousand fatalities occurred from wounds and sickness in the expeditionary force of more than two million men in France, practically twice that number

of people were killed in avoidable accidents in the United States. During this same period, when fewer than three hundred thousand persons were wounded, about three million persons were injured from accidents in the United States, most of which might have been avoided. Our school district shares these accidents. These statistics suggest that the problem of accidents is one that must be considered by the teacher and school administrator.

Secondly, the material and situations available in accident instruction afford unusual opportunity for providing motive in the work in English, history, civics, arithmetic, ethics, and, in fact, all the subjects of the curriculum. In the first place, these situations are familiar to the child and touch his life in such a vital way that nothing, we have found, is more valuable in arousing his interest and activity; and in the second place, the curriculum may be greatly enriched by this additional subject-matter. The need of accident prevention and the desirability of creating attitudes and ideals about accidents, both as a community and individual need, provide unit situations through which may be taught most successfully English, history, reading, etc.

Thirdly, the subject-matter of accident prevention helps to make possible the use of the project method in the presentation of the various subjects. Since the teacher must seek actual situations through which she expects to develop skills, ideals, and attitudes, all the work becomes actual projects to the child. It furthermore socializes the educational processes.

These objectives afford, then, the motive for this experiment. The result of this experiment has been the introduction of the teaching of accident prevention into the curriculum of our observation school. An important element in the experiment was the determination of the place of accident instruction in the curriculum. When the need of instruction in accident prevention was sufficiently felt for us to undertake accident instruction, the first problem was to seek to carry it out without the addition of a further burden to the already congested curriculum. Our first step, then, was to give our attention to the problem of the introduction of this additional subject-matter. Upon examination of the curriculum, we found that the subject-matter of the regular curriculum could be more effectively taught through the use of accident situations. The following examples will show how the subject-matter has been

connected with social situations so as to give meaning to regular curricular instruction and to arouse the child to the point where he can feel the vital nature of the regular subjects.

#### READING LESSON

*Assignment.*—The reading of articles in the newspapers and magazines bearing on accident prevention selected from any source within the experience of the child.

*Preparation.*—The child is to read as widely as possible from these sources in order that he may select the best example of a description of an accident and that he may read it to the class for the purpose of leading the members of the class to avoid such an accident themselves. Also, his purpose is to make such an impression upon the class from his reading that the members will vote to include the selection read in a scrapbook to be put in the library for future classes and for the use of the school.

*Recitation.*—The children read their respective selections; the class discusses the merits and defects of each and finally votes to include or not to include the selection in the scrapbook for the library.

*Objectives.*—(1) The pupil acquires the habit of reading the types of material that every citizen should know how to read intelligently. (2) In the class discussion the pupil develops the capacity for the exercise of critical judgment toward material found in newspapers and magazines. (3) The pupil gains a great deal of social information in the preparation of his particular lesson. (4) Under the impelling motive of influencing the class through his selection and of preserving his selection for future classes, the pupil acquires skill of reading, of interpretation, and proper manner of presentation. (5) The pupil actually participates in a social function and acquires skill and habits in such matters. (6) The pupil acquires knowledge, attitudes, and ideals concerning the prevention of accidents.

#### CIVICS LESSON

*Assignment.*—Notice and read the daily newspapers for one week and clip all the news concerning coroner's court activities. The class selects a committee to visit a coroner's court and hear an inquest. All pupils find from parents, friends, or any other source all possible information concerning the history, purpose,

function, and general effectiveness of the coroner's court and inquest in their city.

*Preparation.*—Follows the assignment.

*Recitation.*—Report of the committee. A discussion of the nature, function, purpose, and effectiveness of the coroner's court. Children participate freely in the discussion and read any of their clippings that they think particularly pertinent. The court and its functions are regarded mainly in relation to the prevention of accidents.

*Objectives.*—(1) Knowledge of an important social institution. (2) Participation of the class in a social exercise in the selection of a committee to perform a social function for the class. (3) The establishing of habits in the children of reading newspapers carefully and critically. (4) New points of social contact and interests. (One boy discovered the need of magazines for prisoners in the local jail and formed a club of school children to supply them.) (5) The class selects representatives to bring any vital information in the form of four-minute speeches to other classes in the school. Thus the pupils learn a new social responsibility and acquire a valuable skill in public speaking on vital matters.

#### ARITHMETIC LESSON

*Assignment.*—Gather data on accidents in city and make problems from the statistics.

*Preparation.*—Put the statistics into tables, make graphs and problem solutions. The following problems are some of those constructed by a seventh-grade class and will show how the pupils are led to find and interpret important social statistics in their daily exercises:

1. The number of deaths by accident in St. Louis in 1916 was 525; in 1918, 464. How much was the number decreased in 1918? What part was it decreased?

2. There were 510 people killed by accident in St. Louis in 1917; 75 of these were children under 10 years of age, 48 were from 10 to 20 years. What number beyond the age of 20 were killed in 1917?

3. Six thousand children under 10 years of age were killed by accident in the United States in 1917. If this number could be reduced 10 per cent by safety first, how many would be saved in 1918?

The graph solutions of accident statistics in Figs. 1 and 2 show how the problems help the children acquire a knowledge of the kind of statistics and their interpretation that they will need to be acquainted with in their daily life. These graphs are reproductions of the work of two seventh-grade children and show how children of this grade are taught to treat accident statistics.

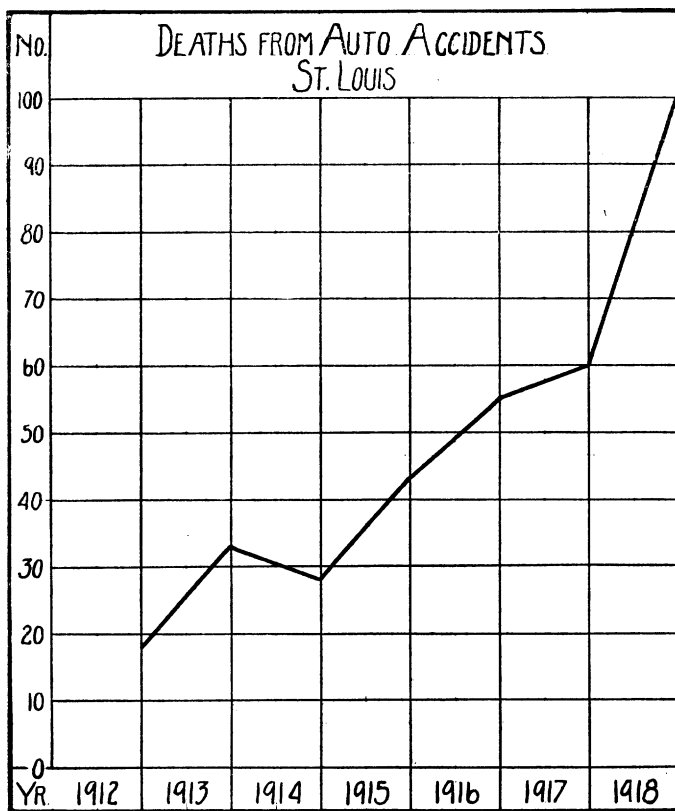


FIG. 1

*Recitation.*—Placing problems upon the board, and the discussion of the solution and the ways of handling such statistics.

*Objectives.*—(1) The acquisition of skill and judgment in the handling of important social statistics. (2) Knowledge of accident conditions in the community and nation. (3) Knowledge of the different methods of arithmetical solutions. (4) Skill in computa-

tion and in handling statistics. (5) Knowledge of sources of statistics and ability to gather those statistics and interpret them.

#### ENGLISH LESSON

*Assignment.*—Description of accidents I have seen or imaginary, avoidable accidents.

*Preparation.*—Discussion in class of the various accidents seen by members and accidents imagined, emphasizing the important elements in the story and the points of emphasis. The children are to think over their stories and tell them to their little friends for practice.

#### DEATHS FROM AUTO ACCIDENTS IN ST LOUIS — 1912 to 1918.

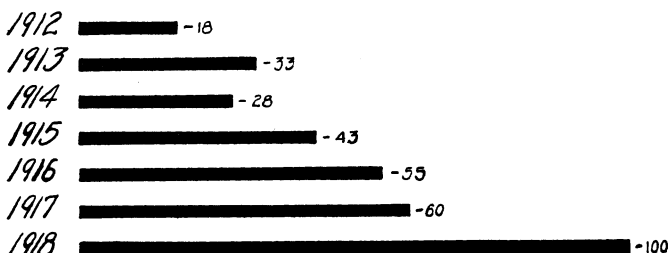


FIG. 2

*Recitation.*—Oral composition. Description in clear English of an accident within the experience of the child. A free discussion and criticism of the presentation by the class. A selection by the class of pupils to present their stories to other classes in the school.

*Objectives.*—(1) Ability to stand before a group of fellows and make a speech. (2) Power of oral English expression. (3) Consciousness of accident situations. (4) Proper attitudes toward accidents in the community.

#### DRAWING LESSON

*Assignment.*—The selection of a street-crossing or other accident situation for a drawing lesson.

*Preparation.*—Discussion of the situation and a determination of the points of emphasis as a class exercise.

*Recitation.*—Drawing the accident situation under the supervision of the teacher. Discussion by the class of the drawings and the selection of drawings for display in the school, on the bulletin boards, and in the halls.

*Objectives.*—(1) Making the children conscious of the situations that cause accidents. (2) Increasing one's drawing ability. (3) New sense of social obligation in drawing to influence the members of the school against accidents.

These are merely typical lessons that have been carried out in the upper grades. It will be noted that each lesson, although the point of emphasis is drawing, English, arithmetic, civics, etc., actually affords exercise in all the other subjects. Each lesson is an exercise in civics, English, drawing, etc.

A second means of giving accident instruction is through dramatization and pantomime. This might be regarded as part of the English work. In the dramatization the children usually select some dramatic incident connected with an accident, construct their play, and present it as a part of the classroom exercise. The pantomimes attempt to reproduce accident situations, but by the introduction of the proper means of safety the accident is prevented.

A third means of teaching accident prevention is through the school organization. Space does not allow us to give any detail of this organization except to say that committees, among which is an accident prevention committee, have the care of the general welfare of the school. These children's committees in accident prevention guard the halls, the yards, and even the dangerous street crossings and prevent children's accidents there. The value of this organization is that it quickens the social consciousness and deepens the appreciation of safety as a community matter and tends to fix attitudes and habits of cautious behavior in the presence of dangerous situations. In the meetings for the discussion of ways and means of bettering accident conditions in the community and school, children acquire not only social attitudes and ideals about safety but also the ability to participate in meetings wherein the welfare of their community is concerned.